



THE BOUNDARY MARKER

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IBWC HOSTS INTERNATIONAL GROUNDWATER CONFERENCE

An international scientific workshop on groundwater issues sponsored by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization of American States (OAS) Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources Management (ISARM) Americas Programme was held in El Paso, Texas November 10-12, 2004. The Transboundary Aquifers of the Americas Workshop was hosted by the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) at the Radisson Suite Hotel El Paso Airport. Some 50 experts participated, representing more than a dozen countries of the Americas including Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, and the United States, among others.

"I am pleased that the International Boundary and Water Commission was able to bring this international water conference to El Paso," said Arturo Q. Duran, United States Commissioner of the IBWC. "Our agency is at the forefront of addressing transboundary water issues and we welcome the opportunity to present our research to this group of international scientists."

At the workshop, U.S. and Mexican representatives of the IBWC presented the case study for the Hueco Bolson, the transboundary aquifer of El Paso, Texas-Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. Other

case studies focused on transboundary aquifers in Brazil-Bolivia-Paraguay, El Salvador-Guatemala, Dominican Republic-Haiti, and Argentina-Bolivia-Paraguay.

In remarks to the scientists, Com. Duran underscored that building effective relationships is conducive to reaching solutions to water resource

challenges in the Americas. He also pointed out that planning and management of water resources will be more effective when done by watershed rather than simply following political boundaries.

The ISARM Programme aims at improving understanding of scientific, socioeconomic, legal institutional and environmental issues related to the management of transboundary aquifers. As the

leading agency in coordinating the UNESCO/OAS ISARM-Americas Programme, OAS has focused its efforts on helping American countries become involved in carrying out the ISARM-Americas Programme's tasks. Among the most important steps of the programme is the collection of data on transboundary aquifers.

The first UNESCO/OAS ISARM-Americas Workshop was held in Montevideo, Uruguay in 2003. At the conclusion of the 2003 meeting, IBWC offered to host the 2004 event in El Paso.



**Water experts from across the hemisphere listen to
IBWC discuss its work on the U.S.-Mexico border**



USIBWC ADVANCES SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA SANITATION PROJECT

In recent months, the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has made substantial progress on the San Diego-Tijuana sanitation project. The project is intended to treat sewage generated in Tijuana, Mexico to standards applicable in the United States.

In December, the U.S. District Court in San Diego issued an order that resolved litigation brought by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region against the USIBWC in February 2001. The suit involved alleged violations of the federal Clean Water Act and state water quality laws at the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP), which is operated by the USIBWC to treat wastewater flows originating in Tijuana, Mexico that enter the United States. The order is based on a joint submission by the parties and sets forth a schedule that includes interim steps for the USIBWC to come into compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit issued by the Regional Board to the USIBWC for operation of the plant.

United States Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran of the International Boundary and Water Commission stated, "I am pleased that we were able to resolve this litigation and I want to recognize the U.S. Department of Justice, the Administration, and the congressional delegation of the State of California for the support they have provided to make this possible."

Under the terms of the court's order, the

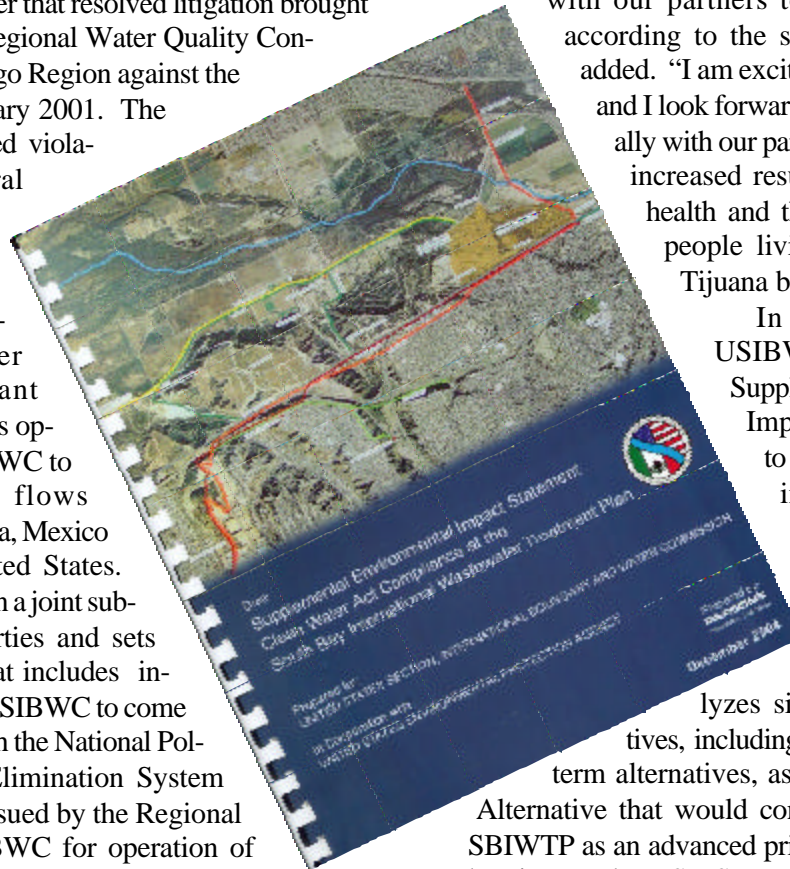
USIBWC must come into compliance with the effluent limitations contained in its NPDES permit not later than September 30, 2008. Currently, wastewater at the SBIWTP is treated to the advanced primary level and discharged approximately 3.5 miles offshore via an ocean outfall.

"The USIBWC looks forward to working with our partners to achieve compliance according to the schedule," Com. Duran added. "I am excited about this new phase and I look forward to working diplomatically with our partners in Mexico to bring increased results and protect human health and the environment for the people living in the San Diego-Tijuana border region."

In late December, the USIBWC released the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) to analyze and evaluate the impacts of alternatives for the SBIWTP to achieve compliance with the Clean Water Act.

The DSEIS analyzes six main action alternatives, including both interim and long-term alternatives, as well as the No Action Alternative that would continue operation of the SBIWTP as an advanced primary facility. A public hearing on the DSEIS was held February 2 in San Diego.

The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement will be issued in July 2005 and a Record of Decision selecting an alternative is expected by no later than October 1, 2005, with construction to begin in early 2006. The text of the DSEIS is available at: http://www.ibwc.state.gov/Files/SEIS/Draft_SEIS.pdf.





AGENCY ANALYZES MANAGEMENT OF FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) in January conducted five Public Scoping Meetings regarding a proposal to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the Rio Grande and Tijuana River Flood Control Projects. The meetings were held in McAllen, Presidio, and El Paso, Texas; Las Cruces, New Mexico; and San Diego, California. The purpose of the meetings was to obtain information from governmental agencies and the public on the scope of issues to be addressed in the PEIS.

In the study, the USIBWC will analyze flood protection measures and alternatives to current management practices for the Lower Rio Grande, Presidio, Rectification, Canalization, and Tijuana River Flood Control Projects. The PEIS will examine structural and non-structural alternatives, watershed-oriented alternatives, and collaborative measures with other agencies and landowners to determine to what extent these alternatives can meet the main purposes of the projects -- flood protection, water delivery, and boundary stabilization. Other considerations include coordination with other entities for restoration of native riparian and aquatic habitats and for the potential development of recreational opportunities.

The PEIS will identify, describe, and evaluate the existing environmental, cultural, sociological, economic, and recreational resources; explain the flood control projects; and evaluate the impacts associated with the alternatives under consideration. Significant issues to be addressed include impacts to water resources, water quality, cultural and biological resources, threatened and endangered species, land use, agricultural lands, and recreation.

“This study will give us valuable information to help improve how we manage our flood control projects,” said Daniel Borunda, USIBWC Environmental Protection Specialist.

The PEIS

will take a relatively broad look at how the agency manages its flood control projects. Once the PEIS is completed, the USIBWC will be able to tier off more detailed project-specific studies. Throughout the preparation of the PEIS, the USIBWC will collaborate with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure accomplishment of both agencies' missions.

A Notice of Intent to prepare a PEIS for this project was published in the *Federal Register* on December 10, 2004. The Draft PEIS is expected to be released for public comment in late 2005.



The PEIS will analyze vegetation management in flood control projects, such as the Rectification Project shown here.

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